

# Our Greatest Need

## Matthew 9:1-13

### Intro

If you were to ask people what their greatest need was they might say ***the internet*** — because it doesn't seem like we can function for long without the internet...

- But when I was growing up, we were taught that our greatest needs were ***air, water, food, & shelter...***

As I have grown older I have added to that list of needs — I have come to see that ***companionship, meaning, & purpose*** also belong on the list...

- But if you were to ask the Lord Jesus what our greatest need was — I believe He would point to a need that I haven't mentioned — ***the need for forgiveness...***

*You see, we could have all of other needs met in abundance — but at some point we would die — and without forgiveness we would be lost...*

### **Matthew 16:26 (NKJV)**

**“For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?”**

Now, I believe that we *intuitively understand* that forgiveness is our greatest *relational need*...

Because we realize that forgiveness is an essential aspect of our relationships with one another...

*Without forgiveness, there can be no relationship with fellow human beings...*

Because we often sin against one another and without forgiveness from one another, no relationship can last...

- Likewise, without forgiveness from God, we could not remain in relationship *with Him*...

We sin against Him often — and it is His willingness to forgive us through the Lord Jesus Christ that allows us to remain in relationship with Him...

- So, it is this need — the need for forgiveness that will be our primary focus this morning as we continue to make our way through the gospel of Matthew...

*Please follow along as I read our passage...*

### **Matthew 9:1-13 (NKJV)**

**1 So He got into a boat, crossed over, and came to His own city.**

**2 Then behold, they brought to Him a paralytic lying on a bed. When Jesus saw their faith, He said to the paralytic, "Son, be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven you."**

**3 And at once some of the scribes said within themselves, "This Man blasphemes!"**

**4 But Jesus, knowing their thoughts, said, "Why do you think evil in your hearts?"**

**5 For which is easier, to say, 'Your sins are forgiven you,' or to say, 'Arise and walk'?**

**6 But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins"—then He said to the paralytic, "Arise, take up your bed, and go to your house."**

**7 And he arose and departed to his house.**

**8 Now when the multitudes saw it, they marveled and glorified God, who had given such power to men.**

**9 As Jesus passed on from there, He saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax office. And He said to him, "Follow Me." So he arose and followed Him.**

**10 Now it happened, as Jesus sat at the table in the house, that behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and sat down with Him and His disciples.**

**11 And when the Pharisees saw it, they said to His disciples, "Why does your Teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?"**

**12 When Jesus heard that, He said to them, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick.**

**13 But go and learn what this means: I desire mercy and not sacrifice.' For I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance."**

*Let's move into our first section...*

## **1) Forgiving a Paralytic (vs 1-8)**

*To remind ourselves of the context, let's back up to the last verse of chapter 8...*

**And behold, the whole city came out to meet Jesus. And when they saw Him, they begged Him to depart from their region.**

- [expand on context — people wanted Jesus us to leave...]

*Now we move on to Matthew 9 vs...*

**1 So He got into a boat, crossed over, and came to His own city.**

In response to the people begging Jesus to leave — He departs and goes back to Capernaum...

- And I think that this is a very important principle — *the Lord Jesus doesn't stay where He is not wanted...*

The Lord Jesus gives people freedom — He is not rude — He will graciously depart and allow people to do their own thing...

***APPLICATION — We should not force our presence or our witness on others — we should give others the freedom that the Lord Jesus gives them...***

*Now, on the flip side — if a person **does** want the presence of God in their life then God will be present with them...*

**John 14:23 (NKJV)**

...“If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him.”

**James 4:8 (NKJV)**

**Draw near to God and He will draw near to you...**

**Revelation 3:20 (NKJV)**

“Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me.”

*Now, the tragic irony awaiting those who continually reject the presence of the Lord Jesus is that they will eventually get what they say they wanted...*

***They will be separated from Him forever...***

But it will not be what they were expecting — at that point they will be separated from ***every good thing — forever...***

- Because ***every good thing*** they had ever experienced in their lives was from God...

**James 1:17 (NKJV)**

**Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning.**

*No relationship with God = no good thing...*

*Moving on in Matthew 9 to vs...*

**2 Then behold, they brought to Him a paralytic lying on a bed.**

We know from Mark and Luke that the friends of this paralyzed man broke through the roof of the house to get the man to Jesus...

***APPLICATION — Be willing to bring your friends and family before Jesus — in prayer — not through the destruction of the personal property of others... 😬***

*Continuing on in vs 2...*

**When Jesus saw their faith,**

It seems that the faith of ***both the paralytic and his friends*** is referred to here...

*And there is not getting around the fact that faith is essential if we are to be rightly related to God...*

**Hebrews 11:6 (NKJV)**

**But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.**

- [expand — the paralytic and his friends are living out Hebrews 11:6...]

*The Lord Jesus then speaks...*

**He said to the paralytic, "Son, be of good cheer;**

*Please notice the welcoming way that the Lord Jesus addresses this man...*

**be of good cheer** — *this is one word in the Greek that means “to be firm or resolute in the face of danger or adverse circumstances, be enheartened, be courageous”...*

*The Lord Jesus continues...*

**"Son, be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven you."**

***Commentator John Phillips***

*“A literal translation would read, ‘Your sins have been and are forgiven.’”*

Now, I would have expected the Lord to simply heal the man and get on with His day...

- But this is not what He does — instead, the Lord Jesus tells the man that his sins are forgiven...

And this has led some to believe that the man's paralysis was caused by his sin — but I don't see that...

- Instead, I believe the Lord Jesus is simply addressing the man's greatest need...

And this is counterintuitive for us as fallen human beings — we would think that physical healing was the man's greatest need...

But the Lord Jesus sees things as they actually are — He gets to the heart of the matter — and while ***physically healing is good*** — ***forgiveness is essential...***

- Now, the fact that the Lord Jesus claimed the right to forgive the sins of this man is a clear claim to deity...

*And the scribes recognized this...*

**3 And at once some of the scribes said within themselves, "This Man blasphemes!"**

The scribes responded in this way because they recognized that only God can forgive sins...

*And they were absolutely correct...*

**4 But Jesus, knowing their thoughts, said, "Why do you think evil in your hearts?"**

The Lord Jesus knew what the scribes were thinking (another aspect of His deity) — and He challenged them because they were thinking evil of Him...

- They had not even taken the time to consider whether or not the Lord Jesus was actually divine — they rejected His claim out of hand...

**5 For which is easier, to say, 'Your sins are forgiven you,' or to say, 'Arise and walk'?**

Here the Lord Jesus asks the scribes a question — is it easier to say **‘Your sins are forgiven you,’** or to say, **‘Arise and walk’?**...

- Now, it seems clear to me that it is easier to say **‘Your sins are forgiven’** than to say **‘Arise and walk’**...

And the reason is that **‘arise and walk’** can be proven true or false *immediately* while **‘your sins are forgiven you’** cannot be proven true or false at all...

- *And because the Lord Jesus always does things on purpose, with a purpose — He is using this situation as a proof of His power and authority...*

**6 But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins" — then He said to the paralytic, "Arise, take up your bed, and go to your house."**

**7 And he arose and departed to his house.**

The Lord Jesus revealed that He had the power and authority to forgive sins by healing the man of his paralysis...

- In other words, if He had the power to do *what they could see* — wouldn't it make sense that He had the power to do *what they couldn't see*?...

**8 Now when the multitudes saw it, they marveled and glorified God, who had given such power to men.**

The multitudes marvel — they are amazed at the miracle that took place at the hands of Jesus...

And they rightly glorified God — as they should...

*But they missed the boat a little at the end of the verse...*

**they marveled and glorified God, who had given such power to men.**

At this point the multitude is still not quite getting it — they do not realize that the Lord Jesus is God in human flesh...

- And this is understandable — it is early in His ministry and this is a lot to take in...

*But I want to challenge anyone who is in the same boat — you appreciate Jesus but you are stopping short of recognizing the Lord Jesus as deity...*

### **C.S. Lewis in *Mere Christianity***

*“I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him: ‘I’m ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don’t accept His claim to be God.’ That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic—on a level with the man who says he is a poached egg—or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God: or else a madman or something worse. You can shut Him up for a fool, you can spit at Him and kill Him as a demon; or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us not come with any patronising nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to.”*

*Let's move now to our second section...*

## **2) Forgiving Tax Collectors & Sinners (vs 9-13)**

**9 As Jesus passed on from there, He saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax office.**

Now, the fact that the Lord Jesus “saw” people is something that Matthew has been highlighting in his gospel...

Jesus saw Peter and Andrew, Jesus saw James and John, Jesus saw Peter's mother-in-law sick with a fever, Jesus saw great multitudes coming toward Him...

***LESSON — The Lord Jesus sees you — all things are open before Him...***

*If you are not yet a believer then please understand that the Lord Jesus sees you and He is ready and willing to bring you into relationship with Himself — He is initiating — it is up to you to respond...*

*If you are a believer in Jesus Christ then please remind yourself that Jesus sees you — He knows what is going on — so no matter how things appear to you — Jesus sees...*

**Psalm 33:13-15 (NKJV)**

**13 The LORD looks from heaven;  
He sees all the sons of men.**

**14 From the place of His dwelling He looks**

**On all the inhabitants of the earth;  
15 He fashions their hearts individually;  
He considers all their works.**

Now, as we look again at **Matthew 9:9**, we observe that the Lord Jesus saw Matthew the tax collector — the man who authored this gospel...

- [expand — who tax collectors were and why they were hated...]

**And He said to him, "Follow Me." So he arose and followed Him.**

This is of course a very controversial choice by the Lord Jesus — calling a tax collector as a disciple is not a great PR move...

- But as far as I can tell, the Lord Jesus makes choices that are *best for the individuals that He calls* and the Lord Jesus is utterly unconcerned with what others think of His choices...

[expand — the Lord Jesus never does opinion polls / He is not on social media — He is not doing things for views or likes...]

- Please understand, the Lord Jesus cannot be manipulated or guilt-tripped — the Lord Jesus is always going to do what is right — no matter what we might think about it...

***APPLICATION — As His disciples we should always seek to do what is best — in every situation — no matter how we or others feel about it...***

Now, to his credit, Matthew chooses to respond to Jesus' invitation and follows Him...

- Luke's gospel tells us that Matthew — also called Levi — hosted a dinner for the Lord Jesus and it seems that Matthew invited all his friends...

**10 Now it happened, as Jesus sat at the table in the house, that behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and sat down with Him and His disciples.**

- [expand on the scene...]

The idea behind **sinners** here is the type of person who is unapologetic in their sinful behavior...[ex. PRIDE parades...]

- But the Lord Jesus was willing to sit down with **tax collectors** (thieves and traitors) and **sinners** (defiant in their misbehavior)...

And please understand that the Lord Jesus ate with these people because ***He loved them and He wanted them to change — but the Lord Jesus wasn't going to change...***

**Hebrews 13:8 (NKJV)**

**Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.**

Also, please notice that the Lord Jesus brought **His disciples** with Him to this dinner with **tax collectors and sinners...**

***APPLICATION — If we are to be faithful disciples of the Lord Jesus then we too should be willing to seek the lost — we too should be willing to reach out to the tax collectors and sinners around us...***

But I do want to issue a word of warning here — we must only enter those environments and be around those people — *where we can be an influence for good...*

- If we enter into an environment where we are likely to fall into sin then we have made a poor choice...

[ex. if you struggle with the abuse of alcohol then you should not seek to reach out to the lost in a bar...]

Please remember, the Lord Jesus could enter ***any*** environment and be unchanged by that environment — you and I are not like that — we must be aware of our limitations...[expand]

*Continuing on in vs...*

**11 And when the Pharisees saw it, they said to His disciples, "Why does your Teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?"**

The religious legalists don't like the fact that the Lord Jesus went to a dinner party with people who lived in opposition to God...

- And this is because the Pharisees believed that godliness was simply about *separation* — about living apart from the ungodly...

But in their desire to be separate from sinners, they had missed the opportunity to reach the lost...

**12 When Jesus heard that, He said to them, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick.**

The Lord Jesus is the Great Physician — and as such He must go where the sick people are...

- Now, in this case, the people's sickness was their sin — and the Lord Jesus came to set them free from it...

Unfortunately, the Pharisees were like doctors who refused to come near sick patients for fear of becoming infected...

- I'm no expert in the medical field but it seems hard to imagine that you can help the sick or wounded if you refuse to get near them...

[expand — medical professionals take wise precautions (ex. Personal Protective Equipment) and then they get in there...]

Likewise, as disciples we must prepare ourselves by praying, reading the Bible, walking in the Spirit and in the armor of God — and then we must get in "there"...

- But our "there" must be the "there" that God has called us to...

*As we move into the final verse of our study, the Lord instructs the Pharisees...*

**13 But go and learn what this means: I desire mercy and not sacrifice.'**

Here the Lord Jesus challenges the Pharisees to go home and study **Hosea 6:6** and see if they can understand it...

- This is a stinging rebuke to the Pharisees because they viewed themselves as experts in the Scriptures...

And I believe what the Lord Jesus is saying here is that He is more interested in us being merciful to others than He is in us making a sacrifice...

*The Apostle Paul made this clear in...*

**1 Corinthians 13:3 (NKJV)**

**And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing.**

*Now to the last part of vs 13 where the Lord Jesus says to the Pharisees...*

**For I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance.”**

I believe that the Lord Jesus is saying that His whole mission was to seek and save the lost — the sinners...

And the wonderful thing about the tax collectors and outright sinners of Jesus' day was that they ***knew that they were lost*** — they knew that they needed rescue...

- The problem with the Pharisees is that they thought they were righteous — they didn't think that they needed help...

So, the Lord Jesus is essentially saying, "I didn't come to call you guys because you guys think you have it all figured out — but I did come to call those who know that they need help"...

- And please notice that the Lord Jesus came to call sinners **to repentance** — *to change*...

*The Lord Jesus does not come into a person's life to pat them on the back and tell them that everything is ok — He comes to change them...*

### **John 8:10-11 (NKJV)**

**10 When Jesus had raised Himself up and saw no one but the woman, He said to her, "Woman, where are those accusers of yours? Has no one condemned you?"**

**11 She said, "No one, Lord."**

**And Jesus said to her, "Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more."**

This is everyone's greatest need — the forgiveness of sin — and the accompanying enablement to walk in repentance and newness of life...

## **Conclusion**

So, as we close our time together I want to remind you once again that the forgiveness of sin is a human being's greatest need...

- Wonderfully, the Lord Jesus sees us and He is willing to come near to us — He is willing to call us to Himself...

And He is always ready and willing to forgive those who come to Him for forgiveness...

### **1 John 1:9 (NKJV)**

**If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.**